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24 February 1978

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CG CIWS 78-008
24 February 1978
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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

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CONTENTS

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The WEEKLY SUMMARY, issued every Friday morning by the Current Reporting Group, reports and analyzes significant developments of the week through noon on Thursday. It frequently includes material coordinated with or prepared by the Office of Regional and Political Analysis, the Office of Economic Research, the Office of Strategic Research, the Office of Scientific Intelligence, the Office of Weapons Intelligence, and the Office of Geographic and Cartographic Research.

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11 Argentina's Ambitious Admiral

Comments and queries on the contents of this publication are welcome. They may be directed to the editor of the Weekly, telephone: [redacted]

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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

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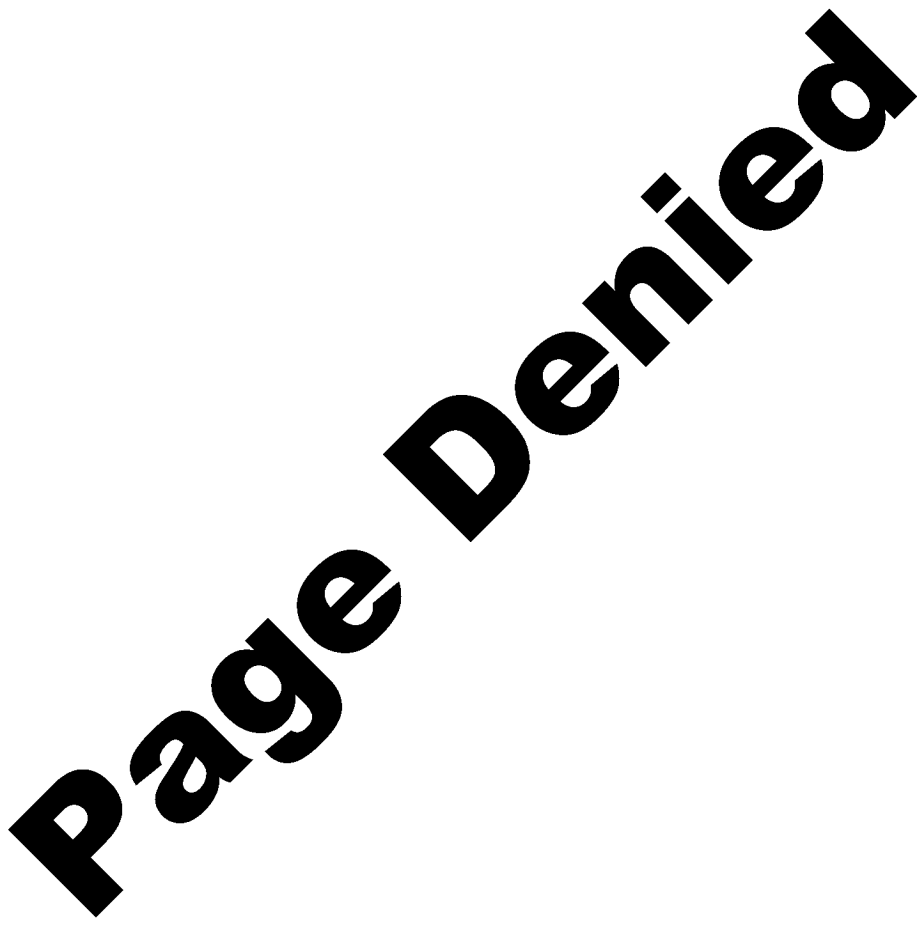

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

NR
Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

NR

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

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Admiral Massera, a member of the three-man governing military junta in Argentina, is actively politicking outside the junta, and may have ambitions to become president.

Argentina's Ambitious Admiral

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Admiral Emilio Massera, Argentina's 52-year-old Navy commander, is a frequent critic of President Videla both in public and privately. As a member of the three-man ruling military junta, his outspoken challenges at times have been a serious hindrance to the President.

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He has recently been actively cultivating a civilian following, suggesting to many Argentines that he has presidential ambitions.

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Although it is not unusual for an Argentine military man, even if he is not seeking higher office, to have political contacts among a variety of civilian groups, Massera appears to try to maintain as wide a spectrum of such contacts as possible. Even while he publicly condemns Peronism and organized labor for aggravating Argentina's problems, for example, Massera has increased his contacts with these very groups.

At the same time that the admiral is seeking grass-roots support for himself, he frequently attacks the "populism" of Videla and the President's leading supporter, Army Chief of Staff Viola.

The Human Rights Issue

Massera also plays to US audiences on human rights issues. In a story appearing in the *Washington Post* late last month, the admiral is reported to have said he would halt human rights abuses if he became president and that he was eager to talk with President Carter to stress his concern for human rights. Such statements from a man who, by all accounts, has consistently been an obstacle to Videla's own attempts to ease political repression are clearly self-serving. Indeed, Massera has accused the President of not being harsh enough in the treatment either of leftists or of corrupt Peronists and labor leaders, and he appears to be behind the rough treatment the Navy metes out to those it detains in the campaign against terrorism and corruption.

Almost from the advent of the junta nearly two years ago, Massera has been an unsettling factor, aiming his criticism at

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

3.5(c) Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

both the style and substance of Videla's policies. When the President proclaims the need for "dialogue" with representative civilian groups, Massera accuses Videla of capitulating to the very forces that created the chaos that obliged the military to intervene in 1976. At times, Massera has withheld Navy cooperation, as when he refused to provide Videla with a list of persons detained by the Navy.

The admiral probably has the sympathy of at least some military men outside the Navy, which probably accounts for the fact that Videla apparently has never seriously explored ways to unseat him. Massera appears to have a good sense of timing—of knowing how hard he can press at any particular moment and when he should back off and let the dust settle.

Massera has so far avoided being branded a chronic malcontent, partly because he does not keep up a steady barrage, and because he picks his issues with care. He makes a point of focusing on problems of concern to all Argentines and comes across as a man who has serious thoughts on the major issues of the day.

Videla and his supporters cannot easily put aside Massera's call for no-holds-barred repression of terrorists, or ignore the admiral's criticism of the economic austerity program, which, he points out, discriminates against working people by placing restraints on wages but not on prices. Massera makes life as difficult as he can for Videla and his supporters so that the President—and the Army—will be seen in the worst possible light and he and the Navy, by comparison, will look good.

Promoter of Navy Interests

Massera, acutely aware that his main constituency is the Navy, is an active promoter of its interests. The Army has always been the most powerful and influential of the services, but Massera has worked hard to secure for the Navy an important role in major issues.

He has actively involved the Navy in the counterinsurgency campaign, portraying his service as much more disposed than the Army to get the job done quickly and thoroughly. Massera also has the Navy engaged in the process of drafting a new basic law defining the ultimate political role of labor, a key political force during the Peron regimes but now in virtual limbo.

Massera certainly realizes that Argentina's territorial sea claim and its disputes with Chile and the UK present an opportunity to expand Navy influence by stressing to his countrymen the need for a stronger Navy, but his public remarks on such issues are no more nationalistic than those of many other prominent Argentines. The Chileans reportedly think Massera stands in the way of a more conciliatory Argentine position on the Beagle Channel dispute, but in fact, there is little evidence to support this view.

Presidential Ambitions

Massera probably is not actively seeking to bring down the government. The Army is simply too powerful—and relatively united—to permit it. Massera realizes that the Army would use any sign of a conspiracy to discredit him and the Navy. It is one thing for Massera to criticize or to say that he could do a better job of governing Argentina; it is quite another to try to subvert a government that is not widely unpopular and is viewed as seriously taking on, however imperfectly, the tasks that need doing.

If Massera indeed hopes to become president, his best hope lies in building the foundation for an eventual civilian candidacy—something he is clearly doing. The chances for an early return to civilian rule are slim, however, and Massera will have a long wait. During that time, the national political situation could, and probably will, change significantly and Massera could well disappear from the political scene.

Massera is facing mandatory retirement from active duty this fall. The other junta members also are subject to mandatory military retirement, but considerably later. When he retires, Massera will lose the power that comes from being commander of the nation's number-two military service. While he still retains the prerogatives of his position, he can be expected to use them to promote himself as widely as possible. 3.5(c)

President Videla (c) meets with Admiral Massera (r) and General Orlando Agosti, Commander in Chief of the Air Force (l)

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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749093

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